

SPECIAL RESEARCH FUND

Call 2020

Methusalem initiative

Announcement and application information

Each year the Flemish Government allocates research funds to Ghent University so as to implement the Flemish Government's Resolution of 3 May 2019. In accordance with this resolution, Ghent University has drawn up rules and regulations regarding the Methusalem-funding. The regulations can be consulted on the Ghent University website:

<https://www.ugent.be/intranet/nl/reglementen/onderzoek/reglementen/methusalem.pdf>

**This call concerns the Methusalem initiative
starting from 1 January 2021**

**The deadline for application is
2 March 2020 at 23:59 (Belgian time)**

Description:

The Methusalem initiative is long-term programme funding from the Flemish government. Its purpose is to provide stable and substantial core funding to excellent, renowned researchers at Flemish universities. They can use this budget in a flexible way to consolidate their international top level and to strengthen their international benchmark position with complete independence. This type of core funding will ease the strain on the Methusalem researchers as they will no longer have to apply continuously for research funding to maintain their scientific excellence.

Methusalem funding is initially allocated for 7 years and is continued each time after a positive evaluation.

The Flemish government has assigned the management of this type of funding to the individual universities and has added the Methusalem budget to the Special Research Fund.

For the Methusalem call 2020, Ghent University foresees the allocation of a Methusalem budget to 4 to 6 top level researchers. Ghent University wishes to push forward cutting-edge research through the Methusalem programme.

This call is not intended for the renewal of current Methusalem funding but concerns the selection of new Methusalem beneficiaries.

Minimum and maximum budget

For each Methusalem researcher there is a minimum and maximum budget that can be allocated:

- Minimum: 300.000 EUR a year
- Maximum: 500.000 EUR a year for alpha disciplines and 900.000 EUR a year for beta and gamma disciplines

The funding increases gradually during the first years to reach 100% from the 4th year on.

Language

The applications for Methusalem funding must be completed in English.

Submission

- Applications have to be submitted on the form that is available on the Ghent University website: <https://ugent.be/nl/onderzoek/financiering/bof/methusalem/overzicht.htm>
- Applications have to be submitted electronically as a PDF document (converted from a Word document¹) by mail to BOFapplication@ugent.be. You will receive an email confirming the receipt of the application².
- The document has to be named as follows: **“surname promotor_first name promotor_Methusalem application”**.
- The following annexes need to be merged with the application form into 1 PDF file:
 - List of publications and supervised PhDs of the candidate
 - If applicable and available: positive ethical advise
 - Own annexes
- The following annexes need to be send as separate PDF files:
 - 1 page summary of the research plan
 - Excluded external experts
- **DEADLINE:**
The deadline for Methusalem applications is 2 March 2020 at 23:59.

¹ Via File < Export < Create PDF/XPS document

² e-mails are not generated automatically, it is possible that there is some delay in receiving a confirmation e-mail.

Evaluation and granting

To be eligible for Methusalem funding, each candidate must meet the following requirements:

- 1° you belong to the second category of professorial staff (full professor or (part-time) senior full professor);
- 2° you have a (temporary) appointment of at least 80% at Ghent University. Combined appointments (together at least 80%) at on the one side Ghent University and on the other side Ghent University Hospital, VIB Gent, IMEC Gent, and/or Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, are also eligible. In case of a collaborative partnership between several Flemish universities, also combined appointments of at least 80% at Ghent University on the one side and one or more Flemish universities on the other side, are also eligible;
- 3° you meet the criteria of excellence which show that you substantially contribute to the development of your scientific field and that you are internationally recognized for this contribution;
- 4° prove that more than other researchers you have obtained research funding such as GOA, EU, EOS, FWO and/or VLAIO funding;
- 5° you have a research group of sufficient critical mass, which can be shown, amongst others, by the number of postdoctoral researchers that has been part of it long-term;
- 6° preferably you do not retire between 1 January 2021 (the earliest possible start date of the Methusalem funding) and 31 December 2027 (this period of 7 years corresponds with the duration of the Methusalem funding).

For the Methusalem call 2020 (earliest possible start date of the funding on 1 January 2021) there is funding for 4 to 6 top researchers. Ghent University wishes to use these funds to support cutting-edge research.

If necessary, the Research Council can carry out a preselection of the candidates by means of an advice from the omega committee.

For each preselected application, external peer reviewers will be invited to write evaluation reports. The candidates will have the opportunity to write a rebuttal. Also a citation analysis will be carried out.

A panel of internationally renowned researchers will evaluate the preselected applications, amongst others on the basis of an interview with the candidates and (part of) their groups. This panel will issue a reasoned advice. The candidates will be given the opportunity to comment on this advice before it is presented to the Research Council.

The Research Council can hear the candidates to formulate its final advice.

On the basis of the application file, the advice of the international panel and keeping in mind the global research policy of Ghent University, the Research Council will decide which of the candidates, who received a positive assessment by the international panel, will be granted the funding.

Evaluation process for the renewal of the funding

Methusalem funding is granted for a period of 7 years. After a period of 7 years and if there is a positive interim evaluation, the Methusalem funding can be renewed for a period of 7 years (or shorter in case of retirement of the Methusalem researcher).

To this end, the Methusalem researcher needs to apply for a renewal of the Methusalem funding. This application includes a research plan for the next Methusalem term accompanied by an adequate estimation of the budget for the project. In this application the researcher also needs to demonstrate that the previous term of Methusalem funding enabled internationally leading research that fulfils the original expectations.

The application for renewal will be presented to an international panel of experts (unless the new term starts immediately with a reduction of the funding in view of the retirement of the Methusalem researcher. In that case the Research Council will assess the application for renewal directly). The international panel evaluates:

- 1° if the research of the previous term is of a leading nature on an international level and if it fulfils the original expectations;
- 2° the human resources policy and in particular the extent to which the postdoctoral researchers in the research group of the applicant are encouraged to gain experience in establishing independent research;

3° if the research plan of the next Methusalem term and the requested budget are adequate. The advice of the panel, together with the application and possible comments of the candidate on the advice of the panel, will be presented to the Research Council, which will decide on the granting.

Candidates who are eligible for renewal of their Methusalem funding, will be contacted by DOZA in time.

Management board and advisory board

A management board is established in the research group of the Methusalem researcher. This board directs the scientific policy of the group and consists of at least the professorial staff that is connected to the research group. The Methusalem professor is chairperson.

In case of a collaborative partnership between two or more universities, a single management board is established. One of the Methusalem professors is chairperson and the other Methusalem professor(s) is/are co-chair.

The research group, or groups in case of a collaborative partnership, also needs to establish an international advisory board, consisting of researchers who have gained international recognition in their scientific field. This advisory board helps, amongst other things, to outline the long-term research policy and to establish priorities in the research agenda.

End of the funding

If the Research Council decides to end the Methusalem funding on the basis of a negative interim evaluation, the allocated budget will be reduced yearly by 25%, starting in the year of the decision.

If the funding is ended because the Methusalem researcher retires, the allocated budget will be reduced yearly by 25% starting in the third year before the retirement.

If the funding is ended because the Methusalem researcher resigns, passes away, or does no longer meet the requirements (stipulated in art. 3 §1 2° of the [Methusalem regulations](#)) due to a reduction of assignment, the university board will assign another professor (senior full professor) who will temporarily function as scientific director and as the person in charge of the research group and the allocated budget. Also in this case the budget will be reduced yearly by 25%.

If the Methusalem researcher is absent for more than three continuous months due to illness or interruption of function (sabbatical, chair at a university abroad, scientific assignment outside the universities of the Flemish Community, personal, social or family reasons), the university board will assign another professor (senior full professor) who will temporarily function as scientific director and as the person in charge of the research group and the allocated budget.

If a fulltime interruption of function due to personal, social or family reasons lasts for more than 6 months, the procedure for ending the Methusalem funding will be started up and the allocated budget will be reduced yearly by 25%. This arrangement is also applicable in case of a part-time interruption for more than 6 months during which the professor does no longer meet the requirements stipulated in art. 3 §1 2° of the [Methusalem regulations](#).

EXPLANATION OF THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form for Methusalem funding consists of 5 parts:

- part I: administrative data
- part II: qualifications of the candidate
- part III: information about the research group
- part IV: research proposal
- part V: external experts

The application needs to be completed in **English**. Use font **Arial 10**. If the lay-out, font type or titles have been modified, the application will be considered ineligible.

PART I – ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

1. Candidate

The applicant must be employed at Ghent University in the second category of professorial staff (full professor or (part-time senior full professor) at the moment of the deadline of this call. The appointment at Ghent University is at least 80%. Combined appointments (together at least 80%) at Ghent University on the one hand and the Ghent University Hospital, VIB Ghent, IMEC Ghent and/or Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School on the other hand, are also eligible. In case of a collaborative partnership between two or more universities, combined appointments of at least 80% at Ghent University on the one hand and one or more Flemish universities on the other hand, are also eligible.

Preferably you do not retire between 1 January 2021 (the earliest possible start date of the Methusalem funding) and 31 December 2027 (this period of 7 years corresponds with the duration of the Methusalem funding).

You must mention your ORCID-ID (*publically available*). Those without ORCID-ID: please check the following webpage for more information on ORCID-ID at Ghent University: <https://www.ugent.be/orcid>.

2. Contact person (optional)

Person to be contacted in case of unavailability of the candidate during the selection process and, in case the funding is granted, during the period of the Methusalem funding.

3. Possible ethical and/or biosafety implications and/or processing of personal data

Here you should indicate whether your research proposal has important ethical and/or bio-safety implications. You should more precisely state whether your project implies:

- experiments on human beings? (ethical advice may be necessary)
- experiments on vertebrates? (ethical advice may be necessary)
- processing of personal data (AVG/GDPR legislation: compulsory registration in the register of processing activities, see <https://onderzoektips.ugent.be/en/tips/00001795/>)?
- working with genetically modified organisms? (bio-safety approval may be necessary)
- working with biological agents, fytopathogens and/or zoopathogens? (bio-safety approval may be necessary)

In case the project is accepted for funding, you shall be asked to present a positive advice of the ethical commission responsible for your domain and/or a certified bio-safety document **before the project can start**. The processing of personal data must be also be registered.

In case of a negative advice of the ethical commission, the project will normally not be started. The project, then, can only be executed after it is adapted so that the ethical and/or bio-safety problems are solved and the innovation purposes are still attainable.

It is the responsibility of the Methusalem candidate to provide the positive advice timely and/or to attest the bio-safety dossier timely.

For the bio-safety dossier, please mention the SBB code (or AMV code) of the bio-safety approval as registered at the Office of the Environmental Coordinator. It is not necessary then to enclose the bio-safety dossier as an annex.

More information about the bio-safety dossier is to be found on this link: <https://www.ugent.be/intranet/nl/op-het-werk/milieu#Bioveiligheid> or contact the Environment Office via milieu@ugent.be

4. Data Management Plan

When research funding is granted by BOF and IOF, the researchers (promoters or holders of a pre-doctoral or post-doctoral fellowship) will be asked to draw up a data management plan (DMP) at the start of the project and add it to the project file in GISMO within 6 months after the start of the project.

The DMP has to be based on one of the templates that are available on DMPonline.be. It is preferable to use this tool also for the drafting of a DMP.

Researchers are also expected to keep the DMP up-to-date in the course of the project and are accountable for the data management of their projects at any time. At the end of the project, the researchers need to upload the final draft of the DMP in GISMO. Questions about writing a DMP or the templates can be addressed to rdm.support@ugent.be.

5. Abstract of the research proposal in Dutch and English

Give a short abstract (maximum 60 words) in Dutch and English of the research proposal. In addition to the title and abstract, minimum 3 keywords need to be given.

6. Research field codes

Give at least 1 research field code. For the existing research field codes, see <https://www.ugent.be/intranet/nl/op-het-werk/onderzoek-onderwijs/onderzoek/administratie/onderzoeksdiscipline.htm> under “Disciplinary Subfield L4”.

PART II – QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CANDIDATE

7. **Two pages curriculum vitae**

This CV should include a standard academic and research record. A suggested outline (template) is available. The structure of the CV may be modified. Select the items that are most important to you. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths (due to for example parental leave, maternity leave, sick leave, etc..) should be clearly explained so that they can be fairly assessed.

8. **Achievements track record of the candidate**

Attach a list of achievements reflecting the track record of the candidate, using the template.

9. **Overview of all ongoing and concluded research grants and funding of the candidate**

Give an overview of all ongoing and concluded research grants and funding since the start of the academic career, using the template.

10. **Publications and supervised PhD's – add as annex**

Give a list of all your publications and supervised PhD's for the **whole of your career**. Please use the format that can be downloaded from Biblio and add it as an annex to the application. Via the Ghent University network and the link https://biblio.ugent.be/person/UGent_ID_code: 801_000_00_00_00/bof?span=all you can download your bibliography directly from Biblio in the correct BOF Methusalem format.³

Copy the link above in your browser and replace the entire red part with your Ghent University staff number. You will automatically be directed to a list in the correct format in Biblio. There is a button to download this list as a Word file. Afterwards you can easily adjust or add information to this Word file. Please do not forget to manually adjust the table with your output overview (at the top of this document) if you add publications to this list. Add this annex to the application form by merging it into one PDF file.

If publications still need to be approved in Biblio, you can contact the Biblio staff via biblio@ugent.be until 3 weeks before the deadline of the Methusalem call.

To give equal opportunities to all candidates, no bibliographic updates will be accepted after the deadline.

³ In case of difficulties in downloading your bibliography, please contact BOF@UGent.be.

PART III – INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH GROUP

11. Give the period of appointment of the postdoctoral researchers and autonomous academic staff (nominative) who were/are connected to your research group since 2015

Mention name, first name, start and end date of the appointment.

12. Give the period of appointment of the predoctoral researchers (nominative) who were/are connected to your research group since 2015

Mention name, first name, start and end date of the appointment.

13. Give the period of appointment of the support staff (nominative) who were/are connected to your research group since 2015

Mention name, first name, start and end date of the appointment.

PART IV – RESEARCH PROPOSAL

14. **State-of the-art of the research topic. Description of the research proposal including aim, methodology and timing, and bibliography of the cited literature – max. 15 pages (excluding the bibliography)**

Description of the state-of the-art of the research topic. The contributions of the Methusalem candidate to this research must be clearly described.

Concise scholarly/scientific explanation with a description of the objective of your research proposal and the progress it would represent in relation to the current state of research in the field. If other research groups from other departments or faculties contribute to this research proposal, describe this. The work plan should include a scholarly/scientific and technical description of the planned activities aimed at achieving the established objective and, if possible, the planning and time schedule.

15. **One page summary - add as separate annex to the application file**

In English. This summary will be used when selecting external experts for the written referee reports or for the international evaluation panel. Also mention the title. Add this summary as a separate annex to the application.

16. **Qualifications of the participating research group with regard to the research proposal (max. 2 pages)**

In this part, the proposed research work must be situated within the framework of the different research topics that are currently being studied by the research group(s) and which are relevant to the proposed research. If the topic is totally new to the research group(s), then it must be briefly explained and justified.

17. **Proposed composition of a management board. This board consists of at least the professorial staff that is connected to the research group directed by the candidate**

A management board is established in the research group of the Methusalem researcher. This board directs the scientific policy of the group and consists of at least the professorial staff that is connected to the research group. The Methusalem professor is chairperson.

In case of a collaborative partnership between two or more universities, a single management board is established. One of the Methusalem professors is chairperson and the other Methusalem professor(s) is/are co-chair.

18. **Financial data of the research proposal**

Complete the first table with an overview of the global budgets for personnel, operational costs, equipment costs, subcontracting).

The first term of Methusalem funding starts with a **gradual increase** of the budget:

Year 1: 25% of the yearly budget

Year 2: 40% of the yearly budget

Year 3: 65% of the yearly budget

From year 4 on: 100% : full yearly budget

18.1 **Personnel**

18.1.1 **Estimated personnel costs**

Give the total budget needed for the personnel that will be appointed to the account of the project. In order to estimate this amount, you can use the table below which contains the costs for some frequently occurring categories of personnel (starting on 1/1/2021). If you want an estimation for another category or for a specific person, you can use the online estimation program of the Department of Personnel and Organization: https://www.ugent.be/nl/werken/salaris/handleiding_raming.pdf (in Dutch).

If you have questions or problems you can contact David Lombart – 09 264 31 23 (David.Lombart@UGent.be).

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
PhD scholarship student EU* (unmarried, no dependent relatives)	€ 46.000	€ 48.000	€ 50.000	€ 53.000	€48.000**	€ 54.000	€ 56.000
Researcher, 0 years of seniority	€ 67.000	€ 71.000	€ 74.000	€ 77.000	€ 79.000	€ 85.000	€ 86.000
Researcher with PhD degree, 4 years of seniority	€ 89.000	€ 94.000	€ 96.000	€ 102.000	€ 104.000	€ 110.000	€ 113.000
Administrative or technical staff, 0 years of seniority (class A)	€ 61.000	€ 64.000	€ 67.000	€ 70.000	€ 74.000	€ 75.000	€ 80.000
Administrative or technical staff, 0 years of seniority (class B)	€ 48.000	€ 49.000	€ 51.000	€ 53.000	€ 55.000	€ 56.000	€ 59.000

Estimated personnel cost (in EURO) dd. August 2019

(*) for PhD students from non-EU countries the scholarship cost will be lower

(**) start new PhD student

18.1.2 Additional information on, and justification of the requested personnel costs

Please describe and justify the requested personnel costs.

Clearly mention:

- the personnel category (e.g. research staff, doctoral fellowship student, administrative or technical staff (e.g. lab assistant), etc.);
- number of years of service (seniority);
- % of a full-time contract (full-time = 100%)
- and duration (expressed in months)

of the positions for which you are requesting the funding.

If it is already known which staff member will be employed, then the person's name must also be mentioned.

18.2 Operational costs

18.2.1 Estimated operational costs

The operational costs, itemized by type such as documentation costs, travel and accommodation costs, use of computer material, equipment or materials for laboratories (e.g. chemicals), office supplies, maintenance of the apparatus, etc., must be indicated here.

18.2.2 Justification of the requested operational costs

Please describe and justify the requested operational costs.

18.3 Equipment costs

18.3.1 Estimated equipment costs

The estimated equipment costs must be indicated per year.

18.3.2 Justification of the requested equipment costs

Equipment costs relate to the purchase and installation of scientific and technical apparatus.

- technical specifications of the requested apparatus;

- whether it involves the replacement or improvement of a present apparatus or the purchase of a new apparatus;
- use of the apparatus in the research project, indicating whether similar apparatus is already present in the immediate environment of the research group(s).

As a public institution, Ghent University is subject to the legislation concerning public contracts for its purchases. Consult the webpage of the Financial Department for information on the procedures for purchasing goods and services: <https://www.ugent.be/intranet/nl/op-het-werk/aankopen> (only available in Dutch).

18.4 Subcontracting costs

18.4.1 Estimated subcontracting costs

The estimated subcontracting costs must be indicated per year.

18.4.2 Justification of the requested subcontracting costs

Please indicate which tasks will be performed by subcontractors, as well as why you have decided to subcontract the work and which parties will/may be appointed as subcontractors.

PART V – EXTERNAL EXPERTS

19. **External experts: excluded researchers (optional) – add as a separate annex**

If you are invited for the second selection round, external experts will be selected for a written evaluation or as member of the international evaluation panel. If you want to exclude certain researchers (max. 6) from being asked as external expert, please mention them in a separate annex.